

FINI VIETNAM

31st SPS, 1970

by Ed Wilson, LM 112

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Tân Sơn Nhứt AB, 1965;

Tuy Hòa AB, 1970

377th SPS

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*"Some of the best USAF fighters have performed on the ground:
The Security Policeman" Ed Wilson*



[Crests and Patches](#), submitted by Ed Wilson

At Tuy Hòa Air Base, I was the Sector Sergeant of the backside of the base. Each time I checked a post, the SP guard would ask when I was going to shoot up my flare. I told them I'd shoot it at the end of the shift. They kidded me that I wouldn't make it because we were going to be over run by "Charley."

I'm not sure why or how it got started, but at Tuy Hòa we had a kind of tradition. On our last night of duty we would shoot our last slap flare in country, with out the parachute. It was my turn, my last night of duty with Tiger Flight. I loved working the Tiger Flight (night shift) shift. I got the usual complaints about the "Day Weenies" moving the sandbags in the bunkers during the day to suit their comfort instead of keeping them in a defensive position. Seems they would pull them off the sides and pile them up to build a seat so they could sit and watch over the top rim of the bunker. The *Day Weenies* just *knew* they would not be attacked during the day. I complained to the Flight Chief and Flight Commander countless times, but it did no good. We would come on at dark and the guys in the bunkers would spend the first hour putting the sandbags back in place. Hell, it was their lives at stake.

I spent the first couple of hours just checking posts and letting those who wanted hot "C" Rations warm them on the Jeep manifold. Now I was getting "those" questions about going home. The same ones I asked of the troops going home the past year. Like "How long you going to spend in bed with your girl friend, Sarge?" "How long you going to be drunk, Sarge?" "What's going to be your first meal when you get home, Sarge?" Yeah, it was my turn, I'm going home, *freedom bird here I come*. I'm so short *a grain of sand is taller than I am*. And as I checked those posts and after the kidding stopped, they would tell me that they would really miss me. That's when you feel the bond that warriors have with each other. It's hard to explain it. You just know you can depend on each other and you would go down fighting for the other. I was going home, but they were staying: Would they make it home? *Not in a body bag*. Not on a *Dust Off*. But go home in one piece. We all said we would look each other up when we got home.

It got that time. Almost the end of the shift. I pulled out one of my Slap Flares. Pulled the cap off, and dug the packing out. I pulled the chute out and cut the cord. I called CSC. "Sector One, request permission to fire a flare."
CSC: "For what reason sector one?"

"Sector One, 'Short timer's flare.'"

After a pause another voice came over the radio, I believe it was the Captain's, our flight commander. "CSC to Sector One."

"Sector One over."

"Sector One, do you believe you have short timers in your area?"

"Sector One, CSC, I believe we do. I need a flare to make positive identification. Over."

"CSC, Sector One, permission granted. If you find a short timer in your area bring him to CSC immediately, over."

"Sector One, that's a 10-4."

I placed the cap on the bottom of the flare and hit it against the fender of the jeep. It shot up in a red stream. About the time it hit its apex to start down, about 20 flares went up along the fence line. My flare fell like a rock on fire. The other 20 or so flares popped their chutes and came down lighting up the whole outer perimeter. As I drove down the perimeter road past the towers and bunkers, I could hear them saying "Bye, Sarge", and yelling, "SHORT", and "I'm next."

As I pulled up to CSC, the "Day Weenies" were loading up on the trucks to go to post. I yelled at them to leave the sand bags alone in the bunkers. I got a bunch of cat calls and a few "fingers." I went inside to CSC to a bunch of smiles. The Captain told me to turn in my weapon and go home. I told him I still had 3 days of out processing to do. Maybe get me use to sleeping nights again. I knocked on the door of the armory and asked him to open the window so I could turn in my CAR-15 for the last time. I went out to the window and clearing barrel. Cleared my weapon and gave it and my ammo to the armorer. He asked, with a smile, if I got any snipers last night. I told him no (that's another story). He said something like, "Cleanest weapon in the Nam." I said something like, "Yea, and not as many snipers any more. Got tired of cleaning that thing all the time."

I walked down to the Post Office to check mail, but had none. Then walked to my hooch, took my cammies off and went to the showers. Came back and put my shorts on and walked across to the NCO hooch. They had the outdoor grill going with steak and eggs cooking. One of them poured me my usual 7 & 7 with ice, and asked how did I wanted my steak. (NCOs sure know how to live) Then the conversation turned to who was going to take over my hooch. They still hadn't selected the "lucky" NCO. No one wanted to move out of the NCO hooch. They didn't have inspections, or go to the 1st Sgt with one of their troops for screwing up, etceteras. They had it made. Oh well, *not my problem*. Three days and I'm gone.

I ate my steak and eggs and had another 7 & 7. The troops started to come in from their posts, it was about 0600 hours. The hooch NCOs dropped by, some ate, some didn't, most of them drank a few. All of them gave me the usual "Short Timers" jokes. We got talking about the "flower children" and "hippies" back home. All they wanted was to stop the war. And in doing so, violated the laws and were put in jail. Free meals and board at taxpayers expense. We, NCOs had the solution. Bring them all over here and let them do "their thing" to stop the war. They could take our place in the bunkers and when Charley comes through the wire, they could throw flowers and dope and give them the peace sign. We were hearing stories about them spitting and throwing things at the G Is coming home.

At 0800 hours I was at Personnel doing my out-processing thing. While sitting at the desk of the airman who was processing me, a Captain came over and asked if I was the Sergeant who took him out to the bunkers one night?

We were asked to take a lot of people out to the bunkers at night just to see what it was like. I think they did it hoping to see some "combat", and they could write home about it. We had two areas that would be sniped at quite often. Tower #7 was real popular. That's where I always took them. About every night we would get a pop, pop, pop, pop and a green tracer would come over.

I said, "Yes sir, I did." He said, "how do you guys take getting shot at all the time like that?" He looked down at the airman and said, "We were shot at out there." I said something like, "Yea but you guys get the mortars when they come in." I think that made them feel real good about themselves because we had an attack just a couple of months prior. Then the Airman said, "Sergeant, have you been drinking?" I said, "Yes, two at breakfast, what do you think we do after we come in from work?" The Captain gave him a dirty look and shook his head, which meant don't screw with him. They told me that I would have to wear a class A uniform on the Freedom Bird. And Cammies were not allowed to be worn State Side. I got all my processing done in one day except for my flight to Cam Ranh Bay AB and my Freedom Bird pass.

I went to the terminal to check for flights to Cam Ranh Bay AB, but none were scheduled. They told me to call in or just come and sit in the terminal and wait for a flight. I didn't like that, but I still had two days. I went to the Orderly Room and told them I wanted to sign out. Went back to my hooch and packed all but the cammies I had on. I folded a set of 1505s (tan uniform, to you young'ns) and placed them carefully in my B-4 bag. By this time I was dead on my feet. No sleep for almost 24 hours. I lay across my bunk and fell asleep.

About 2000 hours some of the guys on my shift who had the night off and other NCOs came in and roused me up. "C'mon we're taken you to the NCO Club." Well, I had four hours sleep and was hungry, so I went. They had a band from the Philippines which played and sang country western and popular songs of the day. We took over the club that night. We sang all the songs with them and sometimes the same song several times. Then when they weren't playing we sang some of the "Underground" songs of the day, like "*Up against the wall M... F... er*" and "*If I were President.*" The whole club would join in with us. We closed the club and went back to our hooches feeling no pain.

About 0700 some of my hooch-mates were trying to wake me up. They knew I was going to try to get a flight out and didn't want me to miss an opportunity of one going to Cam Ranh. Mamma San was with them yelling, "*You no wakie da sergeant. He get bu cu mad.*" They kept saying, "No, Mamma San, Sergeant, he *fini Vietnam*, he go home." Thus began my last day at Tuy Hòa. I picked up my B-4 and took it outside the hooch door. Went back in and walked to the back of the hooch. Our two mamma sans were busy spit-shining boots. I told them I was going home, no more Vietnam, *fini!* They said, "You come back?" I said, "No, no more Vietnam."

I turned and started walking up the hooch and stopped at the curtained off cube that *Airman Churchill* had slept in. Another airman was occupying it now. I remembered being with the 1st Sgt, cutting the lock off his locker. I remembered helping him take inventory of his belongings. *I wondered if he made it.* He stepped on a mine and a "Dust Off" was called in. It took me over 25 years to find out *he did make it.* I don't know how much damage it did to him, but he was alive. I continued up the hooch and some of the guys who were still awake stopped me and we shook hands and patted each other on the back. I walked out of the hooch, picked up my B-4 and started walking. I was lucky, a sector sergeant drove by and gave me a lift to the terminal.

I checked in at the terminal desk and the airman said they had a plane coming in from a base up north, but didn't know where it was going after landing. He said I could get on a plane going to Cam Ranh but it could be rerouted while in the air to another base. It's all according what it's carrying. Boy, at this rate I could spend another year in Nam.

The plane, a C-130 came in, unloaded some crates, then took off for Saigon. I told the airman that I was going to the snack bar for some brunch and would he call me there if something was coming in. He said he would. At the snack bar I got some fried rice and coffee, sat down with one of the *Doughnut Dollies* and talked about trying to get a flight out. She said it was hard for her to get a flight from Saigon to Tuy Hòa AB. She said it took her three days . She had been in country about three months. She laughed about how scared she was when she first got here. They briefed her that if the base was attacked, and Charley got through, there was no place to go except to head for the beach and start swimming East. They also told her that the only people between her and Charley were the Air Force Security Police.

About two weeks into her tour they hit us with mortars in the middle of the night. She said she was too frightened to run to her bunker, so she just hid under her bunk. Then she asked me about my cammies and the patch over my chevrons. She said all Air Force don't wear that uniform. I told her that only the Security Police wore that uniform and the patch was the Vietnamese QC patch, the Vietnamese Military Police. She looked all embarrassed and said, "Your in the Security Police?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I just love you guys. You're the ones that live in those bunkers by the fence line, aren't you? I've seen you with your guns sitting in the bunkers. So you're the guys who're keeping Charley out?" "*Yup that's us.*" She grabbed my hand and arm and gave it a squeeze and gave me a big smile.

Walking back to the terminal, all I could think about was *why couldn't I have met her about a month ago.* I would have loved to have taken her for a ride to the perimeter on our night shift. What was scary was she would have gone too!

When I got in the terminal the airman was on the phone. He looked up and motioned me over. He said he had a C-130 coming in. The phone rang again. He picked it up and listened. He looked up at me and gave me two fingers. I said, "Two?" He nodded. He hung up and said, "Two C-130s coming in. One carrying troops." Usually that meant the one carrying troops was going to the Bay.

I sat around and paced for almost an hour. Then he said, "It's on the ground." The phone rang and he answered it. He looked at me and smiled. "They are picking up some cargo and then going to take off for Cam Ranh. They got troops aboard too." I said, "Get me on it." At the same time he picked up the phone and asked if they had room for one more passenger trying to get to the Freedom Bird at Cam Ranh. He put the phone down and smiled. "You may have to sit on someone's lap but they'll take you." I signed some paperwork tagged my B-4 and was out the door.

At the C-130, the load master met me and asked if I was the one for Cam Ranh. I nodded. He took my bag and told me to find a seat. I went to the back of the plane and walked up the ramp. I could see two rows of Vietnamese Army, most of them carrying the old .30 Cal. Carbines. There was cargo lashed down between the two rows. They all looked frightened. I walked down one aisle and could find no seat. I walked down the other. *Well it looks like I'll be sitting on someone's lap.*

Just then a Vietnamese Officer tugged on my QC patch and asked, "You need seat?" I shook my head yes. He yelled

something in Vietnamese and both rows of soldiers started squeezing closer together. The office said, "Here Sergeant, you sit." Shoot, there was enough room for 3 or 4 people to sit and all with seat belts.

The load master and the pilot came back and checked the cargo, pulling on the straps that held it all down. Pilot looked at me and said something like "Don't you feel naked without your weapon?" Told him, "Don't need one, I'M going home, *fini Vietnam*." He smiled and said, "Hope we don't get called to drop these guys in on a hot zone. They're all brand new, never been in a fire fight." I looked at him and said, "Sir, please get me home!" He said, "I'll do my damndest."

We got to the end of the runway, gunned the engines and sprung forward. All of us leaned to the rear of the plane straining against the seat belts and holding on the seat straps. The wheels left the ground and the pilot pulled back on the stick. Seems like we went up at a 45 degree angle. The looks on the ARVN soldiers' faces were pure terror. If there was a way they could jump out of the plane, I'm sure they would have.

Once we leveled off, the Vietnamese Officer tried to use his English on me. "*You Quan Cahn?*" and pointed to my QC patch. "*You go Cam Ranh?*" I said, "Yes, I go Cam Ranh, then go home: *Fini Vietnam*." He pondered this and said, "*You go home. You leave Vietnam. You happy.*" I smiled and said, "Yes, I'm happy." I leaned back and closed my eyes, not wanting to talk any more. He said some things to his people and they gave some *oos* and *aaahhs*. I think he told them I was going home.

The flight was not long and the load master came back and checked the straps on the cargo again and then checked our seat belts. Told me to get ready that we were about to land. The plane did another anti-sniper *combat approach* at 45 degree angle, only this time down. Then it leveled and landed. I thought, *just one more plane ride and I'll be home*. Before getting off the plane the load master gave me my bag and told me to hang on to it and not let anyone else carry it till I was completely checked in on a flight. I thanked him and we waved at each other. The ARVN soldiers lined up in formation, weapons slung on their shoulders and their officer marched them off to war.

I went in the terminal. It was a huge place. Looked for the "out bound" desk, found it and got in a line about ten-deep. All services were represented: Army, Air Force, Marines and Navy. Orders in hand, I reached the desk. I handed my orders to the airman, he checked them, looked at a clipboard ran down the names then asked me for my ID card. I gave it to him. He looked at me and said, "*Your not supposed to be here till tomorrow.*" He gave me back my ID card and started writing, then he gave me a boarding pass on a plane leaving at 1400 hours the next day. Then he gave me the canned lecture: "*You'll be responsible for your luggage till one hour before your plane leaves. At that time you can bring it to the departure counter and have it checked in. You will be responsible for your luggage and keep it in your possession at all times. If you leave it unguarded the Security Police will have it picked up and treat it as if it were a bomb. You cannot travel in that uniform, you'll have to change into class "A" before getting on board the aircraft. Do you understand everything I just told you?*"

I shook my head "yes" and asked if there were shower facilities available. He made a remark about this not being a barracks and that there were several latrines in the building. I took my boarding pass, turned around and looked for a bench to camp out on. I saw a space and dragged my B-4 over to it. I looked around and it looked like there were more than a 100 GIs sitting, laying on benches or walking around. It seems all the Army people were traveling in their fatigue uniforms. Some of them looked horrible. Their boots were dirty and scratched and some of their uniforms looked like they had slept in them. Then I noticed an A1C (that's the old AF E-4) walking down the aisle. His fatigues were clean and starched. His boots were spit-shined. The strange thing about him was, he was wearing one of those floppy go-to-hell hats. In it he had 5 or 6 grenade pins and some spent M16 shells. In his boot laces he had more grenade pins and a dog tag. He swaggered when he walked, like he was king of the jungle. He walked down the aisle then across the terminal and back up the far aisle. He made sure every one saw him -- *and every one did see him*. Those who didn't see him at first had him pointed out by the ones who did. Most of them just shook their heads in wonderment, as I did.

Well I had almost 24 hours to kill. What could I do? I sure wasn't going to walk around dragging my B-4 bag. I couldn't check it in, so I guess I was stuck in one place with it. I put it up on the bench and laid down using it as a pillow. Maybe I could sleep till it was time to change uniforms and board the plane. *Naw, can't sleep for 24 hours*. So I laid there and I did fall asleep.

I woke up with someone tapping me on the bottom of my foot and calling my name. When I opened my eyes there were two of the friendliest faces looking down at me, and wearing cammies with the QC patch. I got up, smiled and asked what's happening? They asked where I was coming from and where I was going. I told them the story about me getting there a day early and showed them my boarding pass. Then they asked if I was hungry and if I would like to get rid of my bag for a while. These guys were great. I not only said yes, but *hell yes*. They were SP Law Enforcement checking out the terminal. They knew how it was with the bag and all.

In the ride to the club they told me how they picked up stray cops coming in or going out. We went to CSC and stuck

my bag in a closet. They took me to the club, dropped me off and said they would pick me up in about 30 minutes. Or if they couldn't make it I could walk to CSC and get a ride back to the terminal. I had a good dinner and a couple of 7 & 7s and was ready for that Freedom Bird. They came in and took me back to CSC for my bag. I asked if I could sit around in CSC for awhile and just BS. Of course they said yes. We told war stories for several hours, the day shift got off and the night shift came on.

It was getting late and I was getting sleepy. I told them I was ready to get back to the terminal. One of the sergeants asked if I was going to sleep in the terminal. I told him there wasn't anyplace else to sleep. He said *yes there is*, and you won't have to be afraid of being robbed. I said, "Lets go!" I grabbed my bag and got in the jeep. He took me to the SP barracks. His room had two bunks in it. He told me to take the empty one. He pulled some sheets and a blanket out of a locker and said, "Ill wake you in the morning for breakfast."

I went to sleep thinking that I will be home in a couple of days. Home, the good ol' US of A, the land of the big BX, back to the ZI. *Fini Vietnam!*

The sergeant didn't wake me when he got off work, he waited till 0800 hours. He loaned me a clean towel and I went and took a shower and shave. Came back to the room and shook out my 1505 uniform. It was wrinkled but I knew they wouldn't show because the uniform was form fitted. I hadn't worn them in a year. I put it on and found that I had lost weight. Oh well, I would still look better then those Army guys in the terminal.

The snack bar was within walking distance and we went to have some breakfast. It took a while to get use to walking in low quarters again. After breakfast we went to CSC and I said my good byes to every one and a big thanks for being good hosts. They called in a jeep and I was driven back to the barracks to pick up my bag and then to the terminal. The SP Brotherhood took care of its own.

In the terminal, I found some space on a bench and sat down with my feet on my bag. I thought, *Two O'clock departure... turn in my bag at One O'clock* That left me with about three hours tied to this damned bench and my B-4 bag.

I looked around and found most of the Army guys looked just as ragged as yesterday. I got so I could pick out the new people coming in. Their uniforms look good and their boots were polished and most of all, they had no sun tan. I wondered where that left me? Working nights as I did, you didn't get much sun. But I must have gotten some, I was tanner then the new "meat" coming in.

Then there *he* was, walking down the aisle. *Combat Kelley*, with his grenade pins, M16 casings in his hat, grenade pins and dog tag in his boots. Strutting down one side of the terminal and up the other. I guess he really impressed the new people arriving from state side.

I carried my bag to a bench closer to the check in counter. The area was beginning to fill up. I still had an hour and a half tied down to my B-4 bag. It was hot and sticky and all of us were sweating. So much for my clean 1505 uniform. Couldn't figure out why the Air Force made us wear a Class A uniform and the other services could wear fatigues. It was the same way five years ago when I came to Nam from Clark Air Base, only that time we carried our weapons without us. The excuse then was, we were flying in a civilian aircraft. Well here we are five years later and still flying in a civilian aircraft, but the other services could wear fatigues. Must have been one of those one-or-two-star general decisions. *"To hell with comfort, my boys are going to look good when they fly in a civilian airplane."* (Any general reading this, I'm just kidding, the class A uniform is comfortable too. It just didn't look too good when its covered with sweat.)

I saw some top three NCOs checking in their bags at the counter, and by the looks of their boarding passes they were going on the same flight as me. So I just walked up in line, bag in tow and when it came my turn, stuck it on the scale. The airman took my boarding pass, wrote out a ticket, tagged my B-4 and put a claim check in with the boarding pass envelope. No problems, *no back talk*, just took my bag, smiled and said, "Have a good trip home." Two hours to plane time. Two hours to kill. Two hours with no bag to hang on to.

I walked around the terminal, went into the latrines a half dozen times to wash my face in cold water. I walked outside and saw my two friendly Law Enforcement people who I had met the day before. They were talking to some Army guys. I yelled at them and they looked up, as if to say, "What the hell does he want?" Then they recognized me. They laughed and said, "Didn't know you in those stateside clothes, Sarge." The Army guys asked if I was coming or going. I said, "Going!" They were too. I found out from them that the Army didn't let them keep class "A" uniforms in Nam. That's why they could wear fatigues on the plane.

It was getting close to boarding time. The Security Police had left and the two army guys and myself spent the time talking about our services. "Combat Kelley" had to make one more appearance and do his usual walk up one side and

down the other. We laughed and wondered if he ever actually pulled the pin of a grenade and threw it.

Then the announcement was made! *"Passengers boarding for the flight to McCord Air Force Base, Washington, please have your boarding pass available at gate number one."* Our freedom bird was being loaded. This was it, going home, *fini Vietnam!* The two army guys and myself got seats together on the plane. The stewardesses were all smiles and joking with each GI as they came down the aisle. They had ALL the attention on that plane.

Then the army guy sitting next to the window said, "Look it here!" and pointed out the window. We all looked out, and lo and behold, there was "Combat Kelley." He was fighting one hell of a battle. He would grab a duffel bag off a cart and throw it on the conveyer belt that would lift it into the plane. Then he would turn and throw another one on the belt. I saw my B-4 bag thrown on the belt then I sat down in my seat. We adjusted those little knobs on the overhead to blow cool air over us but it was still awful hot in that plane.

The engines whined, and we could feel the thrust building up, then the pilot let off the brakes. We started rolling down the runway gaining speed as we went. Then the plane lifted and a huge yell went out from every GI in the plane. Some of them shook hands and said, *"We made it. We made it."* Yes, we made it. This was the Freedom Bird we talked about getting for a whole year. This was the Freedom Bird that some talked about but never got a ticket for. Some got another kind of ticket. Some got a ticket tied to a button hole in their shirt. Some had it around their big toe. But we made it!

The flight was uneventful. We talked about the "hippies" and how they treated the military when they came home. Some of them said they would kill any hippie that spit on them. I felt the same way. We ate, drank and slept. Before we knew it we were landing in Anchorage, Alaska USA. The plane had to refuel. We got off the plane and walked through a long hallway covered with plywood. On the plywood was a lot of graffiti. A lot of it was the letters FTA. It was cold in that hall way and there was frost on the windows. Yes we were in Alaska. We came out into the airport waiting room. Those of us in Air Force short sleeve 1505s must have looked strange. It was the beginning of Fall back home, but Winter here. After refueling we boarded the plane again. Next stop, McCord AFB.

The army guys asked where I was going and I told them to my next duty station in Texas. I was going to check in and then take 30 days leave. They had to go to Ft. Lewis, get new uniforms and process out before they could go on leave. Other army had to go to Ft. Lewis, get a new uniform and process out for good. That was it, *fini army.*

The "NO SMOKING" light came on and the pilot came in on the loud speaker. "Please observe the No Smoking sign. We will be landing in approximately 30 minutes at McCord Air Force Base. The temperature is 70 degrees and the time is Four O'clock in the afternoon Pacific Standard Time." Then the stewardess came on. "Please observe the No Smoking light. Please fasten your seat belts," and she pointed at the seat belt sign. We started our descent, we felt the thump of the wheels going down and locking. We made a turn and leveled out. We could see the ground, buildings and traffic. No cyalos, no motor scooters or motor bikes, no grass shacks, just your everyday automobiles and houses.

I thought back to when I was 12 years old. I remembered the ships coming into New York Harbor, bringing the GIs home from Europe after WW II. The celebrations and parades down 5th Avenue. Tons of ticker tape falling on the marching solders. And when they got home from New York City, there were other parades in their home towns. Many of my relatives were in those parades. Gee, another generation and another war. My brother came back from Nam two years ago. He didn't get to march in any parade. Well, I guess I won't get to march in one either.

The plane bumped on the runway and a big cheer went up from all of us. The stewardess came on the speaker. "Please stay seated until the plane comes to a complete stop. Check the overhead compartments for any of your belongings." Then she said something I didn't expect. She said, "Thank you for what you did in Vietnam, and Welcome Home." Another cheer went up.

We filed out of the plane and were greeted by three customs inspectors. They led us into a glassed in area attached to the terminal. They told us to sit down on the benches and to keep quiet. One of them said, the sooner your quiet, the sooner we can get this over with and you can leave. We all wondered what the hell he was talking about. Then he said, "Your luggage will be coming in at that small door," and he pointed to a 4 foot by 4 foot opening in the rear of the room. "As soon as you see your luggage pick it up and put it on the table." There was a long table that reached from the small door to the front of the room. Then he gave us a lecture on bringing in marijuana, heroin and other narcotics into the United States. This went on for a good 15 minutes. Then we got a lecture about bringing in explosives, and weapons of any kind into the country. He rattled off how many years we could get for the different offenses for bringing in contraband. Then to top it all off, he points to a 55 gallon drum at the back of the room, next to the latrine. He says, "Any one who has any of the articles I've mentioned has a last chance before we search you. You can put any of those articles in the barrel and we will say nothing about it. That is your last chance to get rid of it and not be charged with a violation. When your luggage arrives you may take it to the barrel and get rid of any thing you may think would be classified as contraband. Be sure to check your pockets."

About that time the first cart with luggage on it arrived at the little door. Our "welcome home you dope heads" custom agent then gave us permission to get up and get our bags. I saw no one go to the barrel. A few went to the latrine as did I. My bag was on about the third cart. I picked it up and placed it on the table. I felt sorry for the guys with duffel bags. They had to take everything out and repack it. Quit a task when your in a hurry and want to get out of there.

Then it was my turn. I opened all the zippers and he ran his hands down the side pockets, then he ran his hands through the main part of the bag, and aid, "Okay." I zipped it up and pulled it off the table. I saw my two army buddies and waved good-bye. They waved back at me. I went out the door and into the main part of the terminal. I was angry and the others ahead of me were angry too. About an hour ago we were being thanked and given a "Welcome Home" by a beautiful stewardess. Then we end up with lectures and threatened with jail. *To hell with them!* I'm home!

... *me fini Vietnam.*

Ed Wilson

*"Some of the best USAF fighters have performed on the ground:
The Security Policeman"*



Edward J. Wilson, VSPA Reunion Photo

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